

History of Peace Pact

The peace treaty of Versailles is the fruit of about five months of conferences in which delegations from thirteen allied countries and Germany participated. The five leading nations, the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan were represented in the peace conference at Paris by five delegates each while the delegations of other nations and British dominions were composed of from one to three men. At first a supreme council or a council of ten was organized so as to include two representatives each from the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Subsequently this council was divided in two parts—a council of four, composed of President Wilson and Premiers Lloyd-George, Clemenceau and Orlando, and a council of foreign ministers.

The first step toward the actual drafting of the treaty occurred on January 24 when the conference agreed to the plan for organization of a league of nations and a committee was appointed to draw up a covenant. By January 30 the conference had adopted the plan of governing colonies and backward nations through mandates issued to various nations, subject to the direction and approval of the league of nations.

The covenant of the league of nations was completed on February 14, on the following day President Wilson left France for the United States. He returned to France, arriving there March 15. In his absence the council of ten had continued its work despite an attempt to assassinate Premier Clemenceau.

A report of the international labor legislation committee was adopted April 11. Reparation demands to be made on Germany were approved April 14 and the Germans were invited on April 16 to send their delegation to Versailles to receive the treaty. The peace conference next considered the treaty with Austria. The Italian delegation insisted upon obtaining control of the formerly Austrian city of Fiume but on April 23 President Wilson gave out a statement that Fiume could not be given in Italy. On the next day Premier Orlando returned to Rome and for

more than a week thereafter the Italian delegation were absent but returned on May 7 in time to participate in the conference with the German delegates.

A revised covenant of the league of nations, intended to conform in respect to the Monroe Doctrine to objection raised in America was adopted by the peace conference on April 28. Geneva was selected as the seat of the league.

Montung was disposed of on April 29 when the council of three voted to turn it over to the Japanese on assurances that it would be given later to the Chinese.

The Germans, headed by Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau, arrived in Versailles and presented their credentials to the allied delegates on May 1.

The peace treaty was presented to the Germans at Versailles on May 7, the anniversary of the sinking of the Lusitania, and an official summary of the treaty was made public that day. It was also announced that the United States and Great Britain had pledged aid to France against possible future German aggression. The manner in which the Germans received the treaty was described as insolent. Numerous German leaders declared they would not sign it and a week of mourning was decreed by the German government, but the decree was virtually unheeded.

Thereafter the German delegates submitted various notes to the council of four asking for concessions or criticizing the terms proposed in the treaty as submitted to them. On May 16 it was announced that the German treaty would become effective when ratified by Germany and three of the allied or associated powers.

The German reply to the first form of the peace treaty was presented to the allied delegates on May 28 and this was followed by several German counter proposals.

Meanwhile the Austrian delegates had arrived at St. Germain and on June 2 the terms of the peace treaty with Austria as drawn by the allies was submitted to them.

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